

Salvadore Poe - BATGAP Interview

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{BATGAP theme music plays}

Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is **Rick** Archer. Buddha at the Gas Pump is an ongoing series of interviews with spiritually awakening people. My guest today may take exception to that term because he is talking about people being “finished” and awakening implies there’s more to go, but we will discuss that. If you haven’t watched any of these yet and would like to see others, there is well over 300 of them now. Go to www.batgap.com and look at the ‘Past Interviews’ menu and you will see them categorized in various ways. This show is made possible by the support of appreciative viewers and listeners and so there is a ‘Donate’ button there, on the site, if you care to click it.

My guest today is **Salvadore** Poe. At the moment he is in Tiruvannamalai, India, which is where Ramana Maharshi’s Ashram is, in fact, he can see Mount Arunachala out of his window. He just informed me that he has a very nice little house there that he only has to pay \$1,100 a year for – I’m sure there’s going to be a real estate rush in India after I announce that.

Sal, rather than me just reading your bio, which would be kind of boring, why don’t you just tell it to us ... the kind of stuff you sent me by way of biographical information?

Salvadore: Well I could *start* reading it if you want to?

Rick: Just get you going ...

Salvadore: Well, I don’t know, you’d have to refresh my memory because I don’t think I ...

Rick: Well yeah, I’ll get you started. “Sal was a successful musician from New York, making records, touring, having videos on MTV and doing film scores, when in 1997 he had a life changing experience that propelled him on a single pointed inquiry in search of enlightenment.” Take it from there Sal.

Salvadore: Okay, well let me just say that I was born into a Catholic family and went to Catholic school in my younger years, but I never found something in there for myself ... of interest; it never struck me. When I was a teenager I just sort of dropped all the spiritual thing completely because I didn’t feel any connection whatsoever.

And then being a musician and rebellious youth and a rock-n-roller and everything, I just went on about 25 years of rock-n-rolling and partying, taking drugs, drinking. And that was my life and I have no, literally no thoughts of any kind of spirituality or meditation or anything of that nature; I was strictly living the life of a musician.

By the time I was in my late 30s I had had some success in a couple of albums on MCA Records and some videos on MTV, and then some film scores and stuff like that. But I also had been doing a lot of drugs, including heroin and freebase cocaine and all of it – it was part of that whole scene and lifestyle for me. And so in my late 30s I had a night of excess, you could say, I found myself wide awake all night and then at noon I was still awake. And I lived on Avenue A in the East Village of New York City, and it was probably a very nice February morning with the sun streaming in my window at noon, I knew in that moment I had completely destroyed my life.

And with the amount of amphetamines or drugs, or whatever I had in my body - there would be no way I could have fallen asleep - something in that moment just thrust me down to my knees for a plea for help. But I had no belief in God or anything like that, that was so foreign to my consciousness, so I just pleaded for help and somehow miraculously I fell asleep in that moment.

Rick: Okay, I just want to interject here that kind of a story is not uncommon; I've talked to a number of other people who in a moment of desperation plead for help, to whom, they know not, and then amazing things happen! It's just once that intention is there ...

Salvadore: Exactly, that's the way I see it. Whatever happened in my own mind, this intention planted itself. There's no 'do-er' so it just "did," and that intention ... I fell asleep and three hours later I just somehow knew what to do. I woke up and I went to a bookshop in St. Mark's Place because I recalled this section of Eastern spirituality or something, and I looked in those books and I recognized three teachers: Osho, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Krishnamurti, so I bought those books and I took them home. And from that moment on, all of the drugs, alcohol, cigarettes were finished, completely, with no effort, no struggle at all.

And so it was a real life changing moment and from then on it became a spiritual seeker on the path. I started meditating, or trying to meditate a little bit and reading every book I could possibly get my hands on. It was a very, very clear cut change in the flow of my life.

Rick: Yeah, you mentioned in your book, which I intend to hold up - I forgot to take it off the shelf behind me – that you had a very interesting and strange experience. You were on a bus and you spontaneously began going back in time through your life and at each point along the way, progressing backward to when you were a very young child, you experienced your life's circumstances as if you were there *then*, seeing out of the eyes of the person you were at that time. Want to talk about that a little bit?

Salvadore: Yeah, I was actually on a bus coming back from Lennox, Massachusetts because, well that's another story ... the first spiritual teacher I ever heard of, a friend of mine named Rob who was a bookseller in front of my house, he used to turn me onto books like "I Am That," and all this. He told me there was a spiritual teacher named Andrew Cohen coming. So I said,

“Great, never met one of those before.” So I went and saw him speak and he said, “If you want to get to know me [generally] better, you can get to know me.” And I said, “Really?! That’s it.” So the next day I went up to his place in Lennox.

Anyway, on the way back from that 2-day trip on the bus on the way home, I had this strange experience that would seem very peculiar to me at the time. As you said, I just started going back in my life experiences very visually seeing, or placing myself in these circumstances, as I got younger and younger. And I noticed in each one, seeing out of these eyes, that everything around me has been changing and changed constantly and my body was completely different each time, and yet I have not changed at all, not even an iota. And I went *way* back, I mean to my earliest possible memories, it just happened spontaneously.

And then it fast forwarded into the future, until I was 70, 80, 90 years old. And I noticed the same thing, looking out of a very old decrepit body, that I had not changed one iota. I didn’t know what that meant at the time because I had just begun reading and meditating. I just thought it was a strange experience. What it was really pointing to I didn’t come to know until years and years later, after I had my last teacher, when I finally recognized some truths.

Rick: There’s a line from a Simon and Garfunkel song, *The Boxer*, “After changes upon changes, we are more or less the same.”

Salvadore: Yes, that’s true isn’t it? We’re *exactly* the same.

Rick: Yeah, exactly. Okay, so Andrew Cohen hmm? Well that’s a whole other story. Then you say that in 1998 you went to India for the first time on a spiritual retreat.

Salvadore: That was an Andrew Cohen retreat, that was about a year after I started meditating. I heard that he was giving a retreat, and the way I am in my life generally, if something interests me I just go, i am in a way kind of fearless that way. I just get up and go and make a move, and so I decide things quite quickly. So I just was gone and I was in India and that was my first spiritual retreat.

And he was never my teacher but I did go on a few retreats with him and they were always very amazing. I had unbelievable mystical experiences and things that I had no idea could even possibly happen, even with all the drugs I had taken - psychedelics and everything - none of them could even remotely touch these experiences that I had. And that was very interesting but of course that gave me this concept that there is going to be this experience that’s going to blow my head off and it’s going to be enlightened forever, you know? It took me years to realize that that’s actually not true.

Rick: But even at this stage, after a year or two or whatever of not taking drugs and meditating, going on retreats, you must have felt a lot better in many respects – mentally clearer, physically healthier, that kind of thing?

Salvadore: Absolutely, I felt then – not that I believed there was any purpose to life – but there was that feeling that there's purpose in this moment because I really *knew* there was something for me to discover or at least inquire into, and I was very one-pointed with that, very dedicated to it and so it really gave me something. And yes, of course I was totally clean from all kinds of drugs or alcohol so in that way, yeah, it was good.

Rick: In fact, you look remarkably good. You must be in your 50s now..?

Salvadore: 58 ... I'll be 59 ...

Rick: It's amazing! You look fantastic for 58 or 59, especially considering the 25 years of debauchery!

Salvadore: I highly recommend it!

Rick: Okay, so then you went through a series of teachers: U.G. Krishnamurti, Douglas Harding, Toni Packer and so on, and what else is noteworthy along the journey that you'd like to bring up?

Salvadore: I went on a bunch of retreats, Vipassana retreats and Zen meditation retreats, Toni Packer retreats. And I believe meditation was the path for me and I meditated 8, 10 hours a day for months and months at a time, often that was what I considered "the way there," you know?

Rick: And did you find it relatively easy and enjoyable to do that or did it take sheer discipline to sit there?

Salvadore: Yes, in a way, and I don't judge it like this anymore but I don't think of myself as a particularly good meditator, whereas some people can sit down and be in some kind of blissful state. For me it wasn't like that although those moments came, but for me it was just learning to be there with whatever is appearing. I'd find the different techniques like mindfulness and focusing on different things, but those all went away because what ended up being my meditation was just to sit there and do nothing and whatever appeared appeared, and whatever left left.

And so for me, that was my meditation. And even though I think I *thought* at the time that I should be coming into some kind of state, although it happened fleetingly, overall it was mostly just sitting there as the non-senseless floating by.

Rick: Okay, and as I'm mentioning these things I'm looking at his book, *Liberation IS: The End of the Spiritual Path* – didn't have it at my fingertips when I first started the interview but just wanted to mention that.

Okay, so then you ended up visiting a sage named Ajja in Southern India and stayed with that person for a couple of years it looks like?

Salvadore: Yes, I had heard of him, read of him in the *What is Enlightenment* magazine a couple of years previously. So I went back to India and I looked him up and went down to visit him. He didn't speak English and he didn't like Westerners so the first few days I couldn't get any connection with him at all. And so I was meditating as usual and then one day some Westerners came from Ananda Ashram, which is another ashram that he liked, and he let them ask questions so I thought, "This is my big opportunity to connect."

And so after they asked some questions I said, "Ajja, I have a question," which I really didn't. But he looked at me up and down and he said, "You don't have any questions." And I said, "Yes, yes I do" – because I wanted to connect with this master who obviously ... I mean Ajja was obviously an incredible Jnani - there's no doubt ... not anyone can doubt it.

And so I asked some silly question about liberation or something like that and then he looked at me up and down and he said, "Don't worry, the light is going to come for you." And then I just started meditating there, which is what I did, and I meditated a lot. And I was either meditating or sweeping the mandir or something, and I think he liked that so he invited me to stay there. And I had a room next to his for the most part of the next two years, although I was going back to the West sometimes, but for the most part I was there for a couple of years, meditating.

Rick: And after that let's see ... you did that for quite a while and then Shiva Shakti – some teacher you went and stayed with and then ... we're making a long story short here. I guess eventually the most significant thing that ultimately happened was Delano.

Salvadore: Yeah, I was living with Shiva Shakti here in Tiruvannamalai and she's a beautiful, silent sage. When I first saw her I went reluctantly because by the time I got to Tiruvannamalai I was finished seeing teachers, I just wanted to meditate. Someone told me about her and I reluctantly went and I could see right away that she was another authentic sage.

So I meditated a few days and then I asked her son if I could move in there and I did, I moved into the room next to hers. For 9 or 10 months I lived there – meditating as well. And there were all kinds of mystical experiences going on. So what happens to me then is after all these years of meditation and so many mystical experiences of *all* kinds - some lasting a minute, an hour, a week or a month - they all came and they all went. And I was wondering when is the one going to come that lasts forever?

I learned this in the school of hard knocks that there's no such thing as that; there is no one experience that's going to come and last forever but I had to learn it by experience. And so I was getting very frustrated towards the end of my time there and thinking, "This is not working. All these experiences are coming and going and where is this thing called liberation? And why am I the same?"

So then I decided, "I think I just really have to go to the Himalayas or something and find a cave and meditate forever there, in solitude." And just at that moment, someone passing through who had just been to Delano told me about this teacher named Delano. Something with the name resonated right away, I don't know why, and then I looked on her website and I saw the words "The Last Satsang," and I just had tears in my eyes and I just knew ... how bold, the last Satsang!

And I was there two weeks later, in Pune, sitting with her in her Satsang. And on the first day of that Satsang I recognized my essential nature as free and always has been, and I also realized in that experience [of] going back through my life, that I am always the same, I haven't changed at all. So now after 8 years had passed, I knew what that experience had meant, even though that recognition was very clear and *very* life changing in a very definitive moment in time when there was a change for me, and just relief and gratitude for *months*.

And still it took a couple of years after that before I just knew it's over, there's nothing I need to do anymore – I'm just myself, there's no problem there. It wasn't *over*; it was over in that moment because the truth is already the truth. But as I tell the people that I work with, there's a momentum of conditioning and thoughts and beliefs and many ideas - spiritual ideas on the path - that we've had our whole life, and this *momentum* has a bit of force. And to expect a simple recognition of your essential nature to end that momentum is not realistic, and I don't think it is for anyone, actually. Maybe in one in a million persons, you know?

Rick: Yeah, I would agree. And so all in all you spent about 8 years - going to various teachers and meditating and all that stuff - between stopping the drugs and Delano, right?

Salvadore: Yes, about that, yes.

Rick: Now looking back, would you say that you could have theoretically gone to Delano no day one and had the same result, or did you somehow *need* to go through those 8 years of all that other stuff before she could really be fruitful for you?

Salvadore: Great question and I would say, definitely no, I would not have been able to at the time. The way I see it and the way I speak with the people that I work with, and it's different for everyone – for some people it doesn't take a lot but for some people it takes 40 years of

seeking – whatever you need to go through yourself and experience and investigate is what you need, and I needed that, what I did.

I needed to get to the point where I was frustrated with all those experiences, as amazing as they were, because what I wanted to know was the truth – what's true? What's this thing called liberation? Had I not been frustrated enough and still had some faith that these experiences meant something, I wouldn't be ready to be this simple and be nothing, essentially.

Rick: So if people, let's say, who talk to you, felt like going and being with some teacher or meditating 8 hours a day or any of the things you did, would you discourage them or in any way even subtly belittle the significance of doing such a thing, or would you say, "Go for it?" What would your attitude be?

Salvadore: I never tell anyone what to do, there's no way. I'm nowhere near arrogant enough to think I know what someone else should do, I don't even know what I should do, to be honest with you. What I say to people is that the work that I do – and this is only speaking from my view, I don't have any proclamations, but from where I see it, the work that I do – you can be finished with seeking, you can be, but I say one has to be ready for that.

And if you feel that you need to go meditate then you go meditate, no problem. When I'm working with someone I ask that during the period that we're working together, I request and suggest that you don't meditate and don't read any other books because it just confuses the mind. You start comparing what I say to what someone else says and you start having philosophical debates. And what I'm *showing* is so simple and nothing, it takes no mentation whatsoever – it's just seeing something directly. So I do request if someone is working with me that they don't, in that time period, do anything else. And if they want to, of course that's their business.

Rick: Okay. When you were with Delano and you had that recognition of your true nature and tears were streaming down your face and all that, can you elaborate a bit on exactly what your experience was? I know it's not "an experience," but can you elaborate on what actually happened in your subjective perspective.

Salvadore: Well I can just say I had this feeling like it's over, you know ... it's over. Like you say, there is no "thing," I didn't discover something new or have some experience; I had all the experiences before, it wasn't an experience in that way. It was kind of a moment of shifting from this seeker being here to this knowing that it's finished, for me, it's just over, there's nothing more to seek.

And it's this enormous amount of relief, I literally felt waves of relief coming off of my body. And that's not like the incredible mystical, transcendental experiences I had before which were

very visceral and very ecstatic and very physical, this was not like that, it was just more relief flowing from this body, you know, I could feel that. That's the only experiential aspect I would say that I had.

Rick: And how many years ago was that now?

Salvadore: That was the end of 2004, so very early 2005.

Rick: So about 12 years or so.

Salvadore: Yeah.

Rick: You say it took about two years to kind of integrate that or stabilize it.

Salvadore: I know those words and I don't really quite say it that way but I understand. It's hard to use words but I would say ...

Rick: For the conditioning to wind down.

Salvadore: Yeah, you know, Ramana speaks about this fan. When you turn the electricity off to a big ceiling fan like this (pointing to fan in the room) - those are big fan blades up there - and so there's no more power going to that fan but yet the blades still spin for a while. So now the blades are not thinking - because I still have thoughts, and the blades are not emoting - because I still have emotions; the blades, I say anyway, that fan that slows down and eventually stops, is the *belief* that there's something I need to transcend here, or that there's something I'm lacking as far as a sense of wholeness, or that I'm lower or higher than anyone else, or there's something more for me to attain, or some other experience. Those beliefs just finish.

But as I say, they're very insidious and they have a lot of momentum because we've heard a lot of nonsense about ideas about this and that that we've taken for granted. So they keep playing for a while until the more and more you come to sort of know this doubtlessly, that you lack nothing, already you are fine as you are, ordinary, unspecial, eventually I say - and it was just in hindsight for me, there's no moment; I just remembered looking back and going, "Oh yeah, oh, that's over," it had already been passed.

Rick: So you say it took a couple of years for the fan blades to stop spinning for you?

Salvadore: Yes, yeah, at least a couple of years, I would say. 21.01

20.26 RICK ARCHER : Right. So, when you were with Delano you had that recognition of your true nature and tears coming down your face and all that, can you elaborate a little bit on what your experience was? I know it's not an "experience" quote, unquote, but can you elaborate what actually happened in your subjective perspective?

SALVADORE POE : Well, I can just say I had this feeling like it's over, yeah, it's over. Like you said there is no thing, I didn't discover something new, I have some experiences, I had all those experiences before. It wasn't an experience in that way; it was kind of a moment of shifting from this seeker being here to this knowing that it's finished for me, it's just over, there's nothing more to seek, and there's this enormous amount of relief. I felt literally waves of relief coming out of my body. And that's not like the incredible mystical, transcendental experiences I had before which were very vistral and very ecstatic and very physical, this was not like that, it was just relief flowing from this body you know, I can feel that. That's the only sort of experiential aspect I would say that I had.

RICK ARCHER : And how many years ago was that now?

SALVADORE POE : That was at the end of 2004, so very early 2005

RICK ARCHER : So about 12 years or so?

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, almost 12 years

RICK ARCHER : And you said it took about two years to integrate that part, or stabilize it or something.

SALVADORE POE : Well yeah, I know those words. I don't really quite say it that way, but I understand it's hard to use words

RICK ARCHER : You kind of wind down

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, you know speaks about this fan. When you turn the electricity off to a big ceiling fan like this, those are big fan blades up there and so you turn them there's no more power going to that fan, but yet those blades still spin for a while. So now the blades are not thinking, because I still have thoughts, and the blades are not emoting because I still have emotions. The blades, I say anyway, is the belief that there's something that I need to transcend here. Or there's something I'm lacking as far sense of wholeness as Or that I'm lower or higher than anyone else. Something more for me to attain, or some other experience. Those beliefs just finished. But as I say, they're very insidious, they have a lot of momentum because I've heard a lot of nonsense about ideas of this and that that we have taken for granted. So they keep playing for a while until the more and more you come to sort of know this doubtlessly you lack nothing. Already you find as you are very ordinary, un-special. Eventually I say, and it was just on hindsight for me, it was no moment, I just remembered sort of looking back and thinking: oh yeah, oh that's over, you know, like I've already been past, you know.

RICK ARCHER : So you say it took a couple of years for the fan blades to stop spinning for you?

SALVADORE POE : Ya, ya, it took a couple of years, I would say.

RICK ARCHER : But still that was almost a decade ago, and so do you feel like there's really nothing much has changed in your subjective experience over the past decade since the fan blade stopped spinning, or is there still in some sense some kind of maturation or something taking place?

SALVADORE POE : Well, I'm sure there's something... we're always learning, first of all. When I say the end of the spiritual pathway it's never... don't mean at all that there's more to learn about life, or whatever. But I just say the end of the spiritual path, at the end of seeking, I know that there's nothing more for me to attain, I'm just myself. I don't need, there's no need in me any longer to seek anything other than what I am now. That need is no longer here

RICK ARCHER : And you don't even have to seek that, because you are that

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, I don't seek it, I just know that's the truth. Right, and for better or worse, I'm a human being, I'm imperfect like everyone else. I just know there's no need for me to seek to attain something greater than what I am already here and now, you see.

RICK ARCHER : Mm

SALVADORE POE : And so in that sense I say there is the end of seeking. But I don't know... is there any more maturation? I don't really... I wouldn't use those words myself, but probably in other ways at least for sure, you know.

RICK ARCHER : And so when you refer to just being what you are, what you already are, what are you actually referring to, are you referring to Salvatore Poe, individual?

SALVADORE POE : Ya, that's right.

RICK ARCHER : The individual guy, or are you referring to some deeper more universal dimension, you know the Self with a capital S kind of thing, or what?

SALVADORE POE : Well, the whole package and how I share it is when we start off in life as seekers, we start off believing I am this body-mind organism, this exclusive body, exclusively, and the content of my mind is story of self which has to do with time – which we can also talk about, which is a complete myth. Well we believe this exclusivity is who I am. And then some of us get on this spiritual path and we come to some recognition that awareness which is just the essence, as some people maybe call the substratum. And then some people get stuck there and think I am not the body, I am awareness. And I say that's half way around the picture myself, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Ya, I was reading that in your book just last night and finding myself enthusiastically agreeing, I mean there are these people that sort of glom on to the absolute, or possibly even just a concept of the absolute, I don't know, but it's their actual experience and that they kind of

dismiss the relative world as illusory or insignificant. You told that story in your book about this guy who had an infection on his toe and it started to spread and spread to the point where he was going to have to have a leg amputated, he just kept saying : oh, oh, oh, I'm not the body, you know, it doesn't matter, and what not and the doctor is saying take antibiotics, you're going to die dude, and finally /

SALVADORE POE : True story.

RICK ARCHER : / finally he took some antibiotics, yeah.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, yeah. True story, so that's half way there. I say I am the body and the (?) people can tell me I'm going to hell for that. I have a body. Yes, I am, of course, because I've come full circle. I'm Sal, I'm not going to deny it, it's just a philosophical concept I think to deny that. But now I know something a little different about myself than I knew from the beginning. I'm not just exclusively this, I know my essential nature is free. Here and now, and so I longer need to feel transcendent of life as it is, ordinary life as it is. I say it's freedom and there was a lot of support in the scriptures as well for this. You know the Hindus say Shiva, which is the unmanifest and Shakti the manifest, Shivashakti, one word. And Buddha says emptiness equals form and form equals emptiness. You don't say there's emptiness and there's form. You say this is one word. And Jesus too, guess what, was a non dualist, because I this form and my Father, the absolute are One, He says.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. And you probably know that Upanishadic saying, what is it, "purnamadah, purnamidam, purnat purnamudachyate, purnasi..." the whole thing that goes on – this is full, that is full, both are full. Take fullness from fullness and fullness remain. So it doesn't, it's sort of, you know .../

SALVADORE POE : Right.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : That's very true and so the way I see it now, everything that I... what we seekers try to do is transcend our humanity. You know, because we're dissatisfied with ourselves because we feel we lack something, we don't like many of our experiences which were unpleasant, which still can be unpleasant, for me as well sometimes. Well we don't like those so we think we have to transcend and get to some nirvanic state of transcendence. But I say this is not a really immature attitude. I say the true attitude is THIS is the transcendence, right here. This is it, there's nothing further, there's nothing behind the curtain. This is it, you know. And once that's really recognized and, you know, reconciled, then what more is there to seek?

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : This is it, you see.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : Life goes on. Ordinary, very ordinary. I'm human. I have no claims of specialness whatsoever, you know. I just am at ease with who I am. You see?

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. It's Carly Simon saying "These are the good old days" (*laughs*)

SALVADORE POE : (*Laughs*). That's great isn't it? Beautiful.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. I would throw in one proviso, which is that some... well, first of all let me just say I don't know how tuned in you are to what other spiritual teachers are doing these days, but there has definitely been a shift in my observation from a set of over-emphasis or a kind of a chorus of teachers singing the tune of neo itvita (?), which is, you know, "you're the absolute, relative, you're not the body, you're not the person", all that stuff, to teachers talking about embodiment and kind of integrating the spiritual dimension into our actual human lives. So a lot of people are talking about that these days, and I think out of need because a lot of people felt dissatisfied with this dis-embodied "you are the absolute" message.

SALVADORE POE : I have a little... I don't know exactly what that means, to be honest with you, but for me it feels a little bit still like a bit of a psychological game

RICK ARCHER : (*says something, but inaudible because both men are talking at the same time*).

SALVADORE POE : This embodiment thing. I'm not even sure exactly what it means, but what I can say is that I feel and the work that I do is that when one is ready to be finished, you just jump and there's nothing to embody. You recognize that you are already what you've been seeking. And then as I say it does take some time for it all to become reconciled which is really just doubts, you know, which is doubts because when I hear the word "embodiment" I don't know, maybe I'm mistaken by this word, I get this sense of a moralistic thing, like you should look in a particular way or behave in a particular way.

RICK ARCHER : I don't think that's the way they mean it, at least the people I've been talking to. It's more like people who have tried to hide out in a transcendent, or teachers who have espoused that sort of thing, it's a kind of an antidote to that, you know, you're not just the transcendent, you're also the imminent, you're the manifest, you've got a life, you know, and you need to sort of integrate both dimensions. (*while he is talking, Salvadore is agreeing and saying "okay"*)

SALVADORE POE : Okay, that makes sense. In that sense I'd say that's basically what I'm saying as well. I'm not sure... as you said I've heard of a lot of modern teachers, I know a little bit, at least the flavor of some of them, but I don't really know anyone else that's worked so much these

days. But that does sound similar to what I'm saying. I don't know what their sort of approaches to making that happen...

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, no it's different people doing it with different ways, I guess.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah.

RICK ARCHER : And another thing I just want to mention based on what you said a minute ago is that one thing I... it kind of rubs me up the wrong way a little bit, sometimes when I hear people say it is there's a sort of a dumbing down, in a way, of what realization is when people just insist that, you know, who you are, what this is, your ordinary perception as it is, that's it, you know, don't look for anything more. I don't think that's quite what you're saying,.../

SALVADORE POE : Because.../

RICK ARCHER : .../ correct me if I'm wrong, but...

SALVADORE POE : No.../

RICK ARCHER : .../ 'Cos you had said that to everybody in the world and then find that everybody in the world.../

SALVADORE POE : Yes

RICK ARCHER : is enlightened, you know, you know, Idi Amin was enlightened and Adolf Hitler was enlightened. He's experiencing what they experienced. You know, it does a disservice to what we're talking about .

SALVADORE POE : I totally hear exactly what you're saying, but there's two parts of it because that is true, and I speak again for my view. My ordinary consciousness now, after I've done all the drug consciousness, all the mystical experience consciousness, all of these offered states of consciousness and states, I say this ordinary consciousness to me is the ultimate. There's nothing more. Okay, so in one sense what I said that's true but you can't just tell someone that and have them be finished. You need, someone really needs to see it for themselves, the implications of what that's pointing to. I have to be willing and able to realize truly that they're complete and whole as they are, and notice that their essential being is free, freely aware, it's a real recognition, you see, and in a sense a realization (*puts his hands to signal quotation marks*). It just can't be said and then say Idi Amin is enlightened, because of course it's not.

RICK ARCHER : Right.

SALVADORE POE : But I'm not enlightened either. There's no enlightened person, but there's a recognition that happened in this body mind that I am the source and not separate from the

source itself. And that doesn't make me extraordinary though, it still makes this consciousness just as ordinary.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah

SALVADORE POE : Is that...?

RICK ARCHER : That makes sense. I think you're saying it and I think that the Ramana Maharshi or the Buddha and all those people could have said, "Ya, hey, this is my ordinary consciousness and it's completely natural, although there's nothing extraordinary or super-duper about it, this is just natural life" and yet, and yet if the average person were to suddenly somehow jump in to their shoes, so to speak, you know see the world through their eyes, it probably would seem rather extraordinary compared to what the person had been accustomed to experiencing, and yet once one is living that way it's the most natural thing. I mean it probably seems extraordinary largely because, like you said earlier, the tremendous relief that one would experience.

SALVADORE POE : *(Laughs)* Maybe. To be honest, I really have no idea that would happen if they... of course that can happen what you just described someone going and seeing through Ramana's eyes, I actually don't know if there would be any surprise, I'm not saying they wouldn't but I don't know if they would either. But it could be what you say, could it be just this unbelievable relief feeling, because I don't know Raman's experience, you know, but I do hear what these people say and they say I'm not different from you, I just have come to know something. And they say I am ordinary and I believe they're telling the truth, to be honest with you, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah

SALVADORE POE : So I don't proclaim to have any idea what anyone else's experience is, you know, but I hear what they say and I know my own experience and it does ring a bell to me in that way, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. I was a student of Maharish Yogi for many years and he often used to say that so-called enlightened consciousness is normal, that's the normal state and anything less than that is, we could say, sub normal or something but there's nothing sort of extraordinary about it, it's just this is the normal natural state that everyone should be living.

SALVADORE POE : I agree, but I would say definitely it's the natural state. I would not say it's the normal state because the normal state is ... *(becomes unclear because he get's interrupted by Rick Archer)*

RICK ARCHER : No, no, yeah right. If by normal we mean average and typical.../

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, yes.../

RICK ARCHER : .../ I agree.

SALVADORE POE : I'd say it's the natural human state. I also even call it the natural human state, it's free, it is. When you come out of the womb, before all the pathologies start getting programmed into your brain, when you come out of the womb I'd say this is the natural state of consciousness but still very human and ordinary. It just hasn't been corrupted yet by the "original" (*hands making quotation mark sign*) sin of separation and the pathology of thinking there's something wrong with me for all these years, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. You often refer to the womb. And that's a sort of tabula rasa view, what we are as babies and... I don't know, you may be right, I can't attend to side with the notion that a re-incarnation and that we come in with all sorts of impressions, even though we seem very pristine as a baby, there is actually all kinds of baggage that we bring in with us otherwise we wouldn't be here, but... who knows... that's a philosophical debate that we don't need to get into.

SALVADORE POE : Yes, so I don't... that is true because I have no recollections of my past lives or future life and so to me that doesn't even... I'm not denying it because I really don't know, I haven't indulged it so I don't know what's going to happen.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : So I can't deny it but I don't personally lean towards that kind of philosophical structure. And I never believed in re-incarnation, honestly, until recently someone told me I was Julius Caesar in the past and I said hey that's cool.

RICK ARCHER : (*laughing*) I'll go for that. So here, I don't know if he was such a good guy...

SALVADORE POE : That's true.

RICK ARCHER : I saw a cartoon recently where there was a tombstone and it said "Re-incarnating soon, don't touch my stuff".

SALVADORE POE : (*laughing*) That's great. So, as far as that kind of thing goes with re-incarnation or anything like that, I sort of am very simple, you know. I honestly, and I mean this genuinely, the only thing I actually know is this here and now, this moment. And that's not even – I don't mean I know anything about it, like what it means or anything like that – but there's this knowing that's here, that's aware clearly, which I say is my essential being and the only thing I can actually know is now. So my mind just doesn't even go to anything philosophical before or after life and that kind of thing. It also doesn't deny it because I just don't know, you know?

RICK ARCHER : That's totally fair. Things that... and personally I think that people are arguing and even fighting words with things that they believe but don't actually know through their experience has been one of the greatest follies of mankind throughout history.

SALVADORE POE : You got that right. Absolutely. Isn't true? There's an ... and Douglas Harding, who was such a beautiful guy, he was 93 years old, he has my favourite saying of all : "Can't you see I'm just space for you to be". And what do we usually say to each other? Can't you see I'm just a psychological mess for you to deal with? Or, can't you see I'm a bundle of beliefs that if you don't agree with me, you're wrong and I have to kill you. Douglas Harding says: "Can't you see I'm space for you to be". And so this is the unknowing, this is not this clinging on to self-structure and belief about me, me, me, all the time. This is such a beautiful saying that he has there, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, that's great, I concur. I mean... and I don't know about you but it's not that I don't believe things but I just don't hold them tightly, because if it's something that I don't actually know or experience... you know, who knows? Sounds like an interesting theory, maybe it's true but I'm not going to like beat you up over it.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, I guess it's the same for me but honestly I just don't care to believe anything. I honestly don't. My girlfriend is the first to tell you, I don't believe in anything. I'm a skeptic, or I just don't believe. I don't deny either, because I don't know, but I'm not going to believe in things unless I see for myself right here and now. And this here and now I don't have to believe this, do I? This is obviously true, this moment there's no need for belief or thought or philosophy or anything for this knowing that's here now.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : And so I'm very content with this, you know.

RICK ARCHER : That's good. The difference between a skeptic and a cynic is that the skeptic takes everything as maybe theory, you know – who knows, might be true, might not – whereas the cynic says: Can't be true, doesn't fit my world view.

SALVADORE POE : Hopefully. I'm very accustomed to that viewpoint, for sure.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Here's a question that came in from a listener. It's from Dan, he says: Would it be fair to say that when you felt the you, that you were "finished", quote unquote, that there is a transition from being the experience to being experience itself? Does that make sense? I could read it again if you want.

SALVADORE POE : You know I think I've got the point. When that... what he just described when I knew I was finished, it wasn't even an experience at all. It was a knowing, and another thing I

often say is that what I share anyway has literally nothing to do with experience in any way whatsoever. It's said know what's true and knowing what's true will set you free. This saying does not experience something or bliss. That's never been the saying. So I call this a shift of knowing. So in the moment when I recognize my essential nature with Dolano, it also wasn't an experience other than the relief that poured off the body because of this shift – she doesn't call it, I call it shift of knowing. I now knew something different essential about myself. Not as knowledge though, or any kind of philosophy, but very directly just as I know this moment now. I knew that here I am, free. And so when I'd say that... when that sort of recognition happened that oh it's over, it was again another knowing of that sort like that.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Perhaps you can riff a little bit on the distinction between knowledge and experience as you're alluding to it, maybe I'll just set you up for that by saying.../

SALVADORE POE : Okay.

RICK ARCHER : .../ ordinary experience involves "I am experiencing this" – I am experiencing an angel – I'm experiencing a football game – or experiencing some... there's this kind of three-part structure to it. I've experienced, in the process of experiencing, and even with regard to knowledge of some sort, I know a lot less about algebra now than I did in high school when I was actually studying algebra, so there were these bits of information or knowledge that were more lively in my awareness then, that are less so now, but contrast what I was just saying with the kind of knowing that you're actually referring to.

SALVADORE POE : Okay, great, that's a very good question. So I'll use my own life experience. When I had all those amazing experiences, I always thought that the experience was the thing that I was looking for. And.../

RICK ARCHER : Hoping that one of those amazing things would become 24/7?

SALVADORE POE : (*nods his head in agreement*) Yes. But the experience was an object in my perception, whether a feeling perception, or a visual, or whatever, transcendental perception. What I never realized in those moments that I am aware of this.

RICK ARCHER : Right.

SALVADORE POE : I never turned it around to question who is aware of this incredible experience which I believed would be the enlightenment. So then, so what I say is... I don't call it knowledge, I call it a knowing. This knowing – to use my word, I have a holiday now and see here and now – this knowing is self-evident, it doesn't need an other... it doesn't need an object other than itself

which is not an object. This knowing is not an object. It's just I know myself. Not subject-object. You probably understand?

RICK ARCHER : I'm following you, yeah, yeah. I mean it's a good point because... you know I am having this experience, I am having that experience and it's all about the experiences that I am having but what about the "I" who is having those experiences?

SALVADORE POE : Exactly right, and honestly that's why I feel we suffer unduly, and hope and nostalgize (*sic*) and remember this and hope for the future and suffer the things that come because we put a... not that experiences have no value, I say they do in a relative sense, but I think we human beings put a pathological amount of value on experiencing, on the experiences themselves. It's at the extent of overlooking who I am, you see, the essence of all experiences.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. And that's because, I think, well we can bring in the famous movie screen in LG which Rama and many others have used, which I'm sure most listeners are familiar with, where the movies are projecting onto the screen, and the movies are very obvious and interesting, and they're moving and they're fun and they're exciting and they're this and they're that, but they totally overshadow the screen. And now obviously all the sensory experiences overshadow consciousness. We identify with the experiences rather than knowing who we are, so maybe you could talk a bit about why you think that is and how to sort of recognize the screen, as it were, underlying the changing experiences.

SALVADORE POE : Well, I don't really know the whys about things because I don't really ask why, but I can see that all of us, almost probably without exception, have fallen into this some young age view monster whatever – this identification, a separate self. I think, in my view, when we come out of the womb we're just aware. We don't know we have a head, how would we know we have a head? We don't know that we're separate and the mother is separate, we don't know we have a name until after several months or however long, our mother calling our name. Eventually we make the original sin: "Ah, I am Sal". And then from there on it's just one mis-identification after another piled on and we're not showing that this is not essentially true, it's all taken for granted. So we just go through life taking it for granted because we haven't been shown another way. And why is it that – I don't know why that is but it seems to be the way it is. Will it always be this way? Maybe it will always be this way, but I do know it was certainly that way for me until I got to the point when I experienced everything that I could experience. And I was tired of experiences, and then I just wanted to come to rest in something more essential, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Mm. I can suggest why it might be, and that is that he senses by the very nature are designed to draw the attention outwards. And that which is out, so to speak, is concrete or appears to be. And it sort of grows, and the growth kind of overshadows the subtle, and so we never said take the 180-degree turnaround to recognize the core of the situation.../

SALVADORE POE : That sounds right to me. Absolutely, that sounds right to me, but I wouldn't say that's a "why", we are recognizing how we actually function.

RICK ARCHER : It's the mechanics of it.

SALVADORE POE : It's the mechanics, the function, I'd say it's totally true. The thoughts get very powerful – the emotions, the experiences, the sensory objects they're very alluring aren't they?

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, yeah.

SALVADORE POE : Very alluring and until we get to the point where we're ready to... well, we've had enough, or whatever... well something just shifts by itself, or somebody points out something. Until that happens, we just take it for granted. That's just the way it is.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : And we overlook our essential nature.

RICK ARCHER : And look at the extent to which we can get lost in it.

SALVADORE POE : Oh yes.

RICK ARCHER : We can be flying airplanes into buildings and doing all kinds of horrible things, you know, just because the so-called... so caught up by the movie.

SALVADORE POE : Yes, exactly. And you know what? It's no one's fault. It's the way it is, isn't it? And... that's a whole other thing that I speak about. This thing about not being a doer here, no free will, but I see that it's... I did not create myself why did that happen to me? It just happened. Very lost in all of that until I was no longer.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : I didn't create either. It's just what happened, you know. So the world is a mess because of human pathology, but there really is no one to blame as who created it all, you know what I mean? It's just the way it is.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, that's interesting, I was reading that in your book last night and you told the story about how some thieves broke into Rama's ashram and beat him with a stick so severely that he actually had a limp or a leg problem for the rest of his life, but he told all his followers: Don't take any action against them, they're just acting out of their karma and just leave them alone, let them go. So...

SALVADORE POE : And this is that which Jesus said, too. Jesus said: Forgive them.../

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, turn the other cheek, yeah, forgive them they know not what they do.

SALVADORE POE : Jesus knew there was no free will because Jesus was thinking: I don't know why I wanted to know truth, I have no idea, it's just what happens for me. I don't know why they did want to know truth , it's just what happens. So he's saying there's no doer, so then compassion. You know recognizing there's no... I say the best reason to come to recognize that there is no free will and there's no chooser and no doer is not to have some experience but it's the birth of your compassion to see that I did not create myself for good or bad and if I didn't create myself, then no one else did either. So who am I going to start condemning and judging and demonizing? You know what I mean? Not to say that as a society we have to let people run crazy and run amok, we have to do something, but then again the way our American culture is – we're about revenge, we're about vengeance, we're about punishment, and we're about incarceration and to me that's pathological as well. There's no compassion there, is there?.

RICK ARCHER : No, and we're particular guilty of it in the United States where per capita we have far more people incarcerated than any other country in the world, including Communist China and so on. But on the free will, as you will, let me play on this a little bit, I would have to say that in my experience and understanding, which admittedly is limited and is subject to revision, there's a sense that there's a certain... on the spectrum of possibilities of being completely unable to have any influence over your life, of having complete freedom to do whatever you want, there's a certain little segment of that spectrum where you have some wiggle room and you do seem to have discrimination and choice and you seem to be – at least I seem to be – able to say: I don't think I'll do that, I'd rather do this. And according to how you use that wiggle room you kind of move your life in the direction of greater freedom or greater bondage. Does that resonate at all with your experience or do you think that I'm kind of like...?

SALVADORE POE : I hate to be a .../

RICK ARCHER : No, it's alright, we can disagree

SALVADORE POE : I would have to say no because there's still a concept that there's a doer in here as a separate self that is creating and choosing and I would say, and humbly so, that there is no such thing. There's no such thing. Not only is there no chooser, there are no choices. The thought "I want to have a hamburger" appears in your mind and then the next thought is "No, a hamburger's not good for me" and then you can say: Well I subtly move towards the hamburger, but no that's just the thought that appeared, you see, and from that thought that appeared whatever is the dominant thought in the moment, the action will follow.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : And it's all just happening. There's no one in here separate like a mad scientist creating a (*inaudible*).

Both laugh.

RICK ARCHER : No, I hear you. And there are plenty of scriptures that say that and plenty of friends of mine who say that and so on, but this is not totally my experience yet, but it's an interesting thing to play with.

SALVADORE POE : Because I say these things can be easily rectified with proper inquiry actually, and that is what I do. I do inquiry with people, so that they can come to see for themselves. And if I'm telling a lie they'll see that I'm lying, but if they come to see for themselves, then they know for themselves and who cares what I say, it doesn't matter. They come to know for themselves and that's all that I care about and all that really matters, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Absolutely, yeah. Yeah. This thing about... here's something from your book. You said whether you're lost in the thoughts or not, the truth is you're free. You know this because the moment a holiday happens you see that it is still true. Oh is it and your use of the word "holiday" is like to sort of take a little break from your usual engagement and activity... /

SALVADORE POE : Stop attending. Stop focusing for a moment. (*the rest inaudible*)

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, just sort of pause.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah.

RICK ARCHER : The BeeGees wrote a great song called "Holiday", you got me singing it lately, and back in the sixties. But in any case, the point here: Whether you're lost in thoughts or not, the truth is you're free. Yeah... but... there's a long way from reading that line and kind of understanding it to actually being really free and all too often I see people who kind of take an intellectual understanding like that and either mistake it or let it suffice for the actual reality of freedom rather than taking the steps necessary to make that their living experience, you know what I mean?

SALVADORE POE : Again, that last word you just said I was just about to say it because it goes back to what I say it has nothing to do with an experience. I can be lost in so-called... lost attending to thoughts for an hour, it doesn't mean anything for me. I don't care, I don't think it means something that I don't who I am. And my metaphor is you know there's no Santa Claus, right? If you see a Santa Claus in a Macy's window, and you're looking at that Santa Claus do you have to say: There's no Santa Claus, there's no Santa Claus, there's no Santa Claus, there's no Santa Claus. No. You know it's finished. You know there's no Santa Claus. You can look at 500 Santa Claus-ses and you still know there's no Santa Claus, right? So what we do on a spiritual path is we believe

we have to get in this state of awareness and if I focus on thoughts it means I'm not enlightened... because now I'm not knowing myself. So if I'm working on music twelve hours a day, I don't know who I am, I'm working on music, you know?

RICK ARCHER : No, I agree with you and I'm not saying that freedom entails being sort of constantly aware of some unbounded state or some such thing, or not letting yourself have thoughts. I think you can be, as you say, focusing on music twelve hours a day or running through an airport, or doing any number of things, but there's a difference between doing that and a state where the movie is totally overshadowing the screen and doing that in a state where the screen shines in its own integrity despite the intensity of the movie.

SALVADORE POE : Well, you see that sounds like separation to me, though, Rick because it is.../

RICK ARCHER : Mmmmm... go ahead.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah? Because if there's an intensive thought stream in my head, that's what I'm focusing on – could be a minute or ten minutes or whatever. And there's not someone separate saying: I am aware that I am focusing on these things.

RICK ARCHER : No, no, no, if you say "saying" that muddies it up, you know, because I'm not saying it's something you say or something you mentally... see that would be just another mental activity you're adding into the mix, you know, where I have this mental recognition, that I am diddly blah-blah-blah, and I'm not saying it that way, I'm just saying that there's a... well, let me ask you this...

SALVADORE POE : Okay.

RICK ARCHER : ... When you sleep at night, when Sal goes to bed, is that it for eight hours total obliteration, or is there...

SALVADORE POE : Other than the dream state in deep sleep, I am not consciously aware but I know I'm aware – why, because if you call my name I'm going to wake up, so I must be aware, but I have no... personally, I have no memory of the deep sleep state. But it doesn't mean I'm not aware. I must be because if you call my name I'm going to wake up.

RICK ARCHER : Well, maybe calling your name shifts you into the waking state from the sleep state.

SALVADORE POE : It has the state of awareness there because you hear that to wake it up, you see. Something has to be aware that it was called and that shifts me into... so okay I make a slight delineation which is kind of a subtle delineation actually between consciousness and awareness... and aware, not awareness. Aware is the deep, in my view, again I say I make no proclamations

here, I just speak in my own view. But in the deep sleep state I am not conscious, I admit, but I am aware because if you call my name I'm going to become conscious and then I'm going to become consciously aware. **RICK ARCHER** : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : So that's the delineation that I make there.

RICK ARCHER : Okay. Well the reason I brought it up is that, just to illustrate that perhaps there are degrees of awakening which are so well established that even the dark... the (*unclear*) of sleep it won't overshadow them. For instance, here is something from Nisargadatta. Someone said: What do you do when asleep? He said: I am aware of being asleep. Is sleep not a state of unconsciousness? Yes, I am aware of being unconscious. And when awake or dreaming? I'm aware of being awake or dreaming. I do not catch you, what do you mean? Let me make my terms clear. By being asleep I mean unconscious, by being awake I mean conscious, by dreaming I mean conscious of one's mind but not of one's surroundings. And then he says: Well, it is about the same with me, yet there seems to be a difference. In each state you forget the other two, while to me there is but one state of being, including and transcending the three mental states of waking, dreaming and sleeping. I have a whole file, like dozens of quotes like this...

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, from sages indicating that a time comes when aware as you call it, you don't like to make a noun of it, is so profoundly enlivened that it persists 24/7 regardless of whether you're awake, asleep or dreaming. I tried that too, I'm skeptical because it's not my experience and I don't know if actually that's true or not, but I've also heard Ramada say that in deep sleep he doesn't remember, or he says it in general you have no memory from deep sleep. I don't know the quote, so...

RICK ARCHER : That would make sense, because to have memory you'd have to have some waking state action going on, your mind has to be working.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, I'd say you'd have to have some consciousness.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : So to be honest with you Rick, I don't know. Maybe what Nisargadatta's saying is true for him in his experience, and again I only can speak about what I call freedom or liberation, and that's just knowing here and now that I lack nothing. I'm fine as I am, perfectly normal and ordinary, you know. My seeking is finished, you know. I haven't achieved some new state of consciousness or new level of awareness or something like this. I'm not denying that those states maybe exist, perhaps they do, but to me they're states and they're experience and I'm not speaking about experience at all myself, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Right. Oh well, I'll let that one rest. Here's something from a fellow in Brazil. He's from Sao Paulo, named Felipe. He says: When I come to the realization of the understanding you're pointing to, at the point of crossing it I feel fear of letting go. Working as a computer scientist I feel like I will lose control over complex things. Is it possible to live a life with a lot of obligations and complex knowledge such as programming and mathematics, etcetera, and also be in that space of total freedom?

SALVADORE POE : Absolutely, and it's not a space of total freedom anyway. It's just a knowing that you're free and then you carry on living. I work on music on my computer and it's highly technical, highly technical programs I'm using, completely ordinary consciousness. So, yes I'd say definitely and I would also say that the fear is that because there's an idea somewhere in there that you will lose the ability to do those things, that you're going to lose something. But I say you're not going to lose anything, you're going to just know what's true and you'll function much better actually. I function better on music and everything else actually, because I'm not busy being pathologically insane half the time. *(Both laugh)*

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. That's a good point. I often like to bring up that there's no reason why a neural surgeon, or an airline pilot couldn't be an awakened being. It's not that they're going to be in some wishy-washy dreamy state, not be able to fly a plane or, you know... perform surgery.

SALVADORE POE : And if you are in a wishy-washy dreamy state I say you haven't really come full circle personally. Full circle is very ordinary, just finish.

RICK ARCHER : Good. So I have more questions here I'm going to keep asking you, but if at any point something comes to your mind that you'd like to say and I'm not asking, just bring it out, you know, don't hesitate.

SALVADORE POE : Okay thanks, nothing's come to my mind, you're doing great actually. I like that you bring up the questions, that's good.

RICK ARCHER : Good. One thing you say in your book is, I think this is more or less a direct quote: They say you need to purify yourself, so you'll be ready to receive enlightenment or merge with the divine, to purify the mind of vastness, tendencies, karmas, and all that. This mind is never going to be pure, how could it? It's got a lifetime of billions of pieces of information, how're you going to get rid of them all? I'd like to suggest that the kind of impurities that are referred to as vastness and so on are not bits of information, it's not that you couldn't be a very learned person and reach enlightenment or something, you could be full of information, but it's more like the deeper impressions that get formed. For instance, to take an extreme example someone who's suffering from PTSD or something, they've done MRI scans – magnetic resonance imaging of the brain and find that they actually have functional holes in the brain, not literal holes but functional holes where the stress has shut down certain parts of the brain and that makes it difficult to

function in everyday life, much less awakened to enlightenment or higher consciousness or something. So this whole purification thing has to do with – and they have actually done MRI scans on long-term meditators and seen that those functional holes are healed or restored to their proper functioning. So I would suggest that all those years, eight years you did of meditation and this and that had a very purificatory (*sic*) effect on you after the twenty-five years of drugs and so on that made it conducive for you, or made you more likely to undergo the sort of shift you did. So there is something to the purification thing I'm trying to say, in a nutshell.

SALVADORE POE : Okay, I think... I hear what you're saying and first I'd like to say a couple of things about that. So... the things that we try to purify ourselves of, like greed, and envy and comparison and these kinds of things that are pretty much malignancies to ourselves and to others. We've tried that through the methods of psychology and everything, and I say there's limited effect as long as we still believe we lack something. There's still something lacking. So if I feel that I lack something in some way or I'm not complete and whole, then it's very natural for greed or envy to appear because I feel I lack something. So I say that ultimately when someone is ready to jump off and come to see for themselves that they actually, in truth, lack nothing. They actually in truth are complete and whole already. When someone comes to see something like this, then there's really no soil is there for greed to appear? Why would there be? Why would there be greed if you know you lack nothing? If you know that you're essentially the same as everyone, why would there be comparison and envy and that kind of thing? They just don't really go, it's not trying to get rid of anything, it's coming to see for yourself that you are free, see. So I speak to people who have done whatever work they've done but still have to be... there's a sense of lack still and because of that sense of lack those things are going to appear but when you really come to see that you lack nothing, I say for the most part you're much more benign and those kind of so-called "impurities" for the most part are not rearing their ugly heads.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Well when you had that sort of on-your-knees moment on Avenue A in the East Village, you probably did feel that you lack something (*in the background, Salvadore Poe says: "Yeah"*) and you went out and tried to find a solution to that lack, not by being greedy or avaricious or anything, but by genuinely kind of seeking knowledge and you went through a purifactory (*sic*) period I would say for about eight years where you worked out a lot of stuff that had encumbered you. Would you agree with that, or no?

SALVADORE POE : I wouldn't disagree with it because I... I wouldn't maybe use those words or maybe see it in that way, but I wouldn't disagree with that either because maybe that is what happened, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : But I say... but I do know for myself at the end when I realized that I'm not lacking anything, those kind of things they didn't need to be purified any longer, they for the most part just don't appear, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Right. Or maybe they had been purified sufficiently to allow you to have that recognition.

SALVADORE POE : Maybe, okay, I'll give you that one. *(Both laugh)*

RICK ARCHER : And I'm not just talking about purity in some kind of moral sense, or psychological sense or anything like that. I'm actually talking about physiological transformation, which has been documented to a great extent. The nervous system itself gets sort of twisted and turned in different ways by life's experiences and those twists and turns can kind of be unwound and enable the nervous system to function in a more... in a way that I would say is more conducive to the kind of clarity that you're pointing to.

SALVADORE POE : Okay that's true, but let me speculate something because sometimes in the course of someone's lifetime it happens that they have an "immediate", *(puts his hands to signal quotation marks)* let's say, "immediate" instantaneous awakening.

RICK ARCHER : Very true.

SALVADORE POE : They have an.../

RICK ARCHER : Sometimes they're drunk in a gutter or something, they have that kind of awakening.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, yeah.

RICK ARCHER : It happens.

SALVADORE POE : And it happened on your purification but that awakening makes them realize something, that they're fine. And so then you can say in that moment those things have been purified. I think that's very rare but I've heard of stories like that. So I don't know if there's a cause and effect like that, this purification process cause and effect. I sort of see it that whatever I did on the path I had to do to come to see that it didn't work.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : Then I just sort of gave it all up. That's my personal experience, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. *(laughs)*

SALVADORE POE : But I'm not going to deny what you're saying, because I'm not an expert.

RICK ARCHER : That's okay, I'm just playing sort of devil's advocate a little bit because it makes it a more interesting interview than probably just sitting here, smile and say okay. I knew I had to play devil's advocate. On the point you just made I would say it did work, it just didn't work in the way you were expecting it to. You know you were expecting to achieve one of these flashy experiences perpetually, and that never happened and never would have happened, but somehow rather in a roundabout way everything you went through brought you to the point where something you hadn't expected was able to happen.

SALVADORE POE : Absolutely. In that sense you're absolutely right I fully agree. I had to go through whatever I had to go through until I got to the point where I just was finished with doing it and, still dissatisfied, found someone who could show me something that's very essential.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Aja Shanti is another case in point, you probably know him. He also said he was a pretty lousy meditator but he really gave it his all for many years and he struggled (*unclear*)/

SALVADORE POE : (*interrupts and says something but unclear*)

RICK ARCHER : Pardon?

SALVADORE POE : Exact, that's like me.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : (*unclear*)

RICK ARCHER : Struggled and struggled and finally he reached the point where he kind of like gave up, then something happened.

SALVADORE POE : I think that's very true for most of us and I don't know how it happened for him, if it was spontaneous or his teacher helped, but for me it was at the same point but then someone came in and very simply, at that point they can just push you over the edge of the cliff, you know, with a simple inquiry or something which is what I do to people I've been working with, that guy can be helpful for you, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Incidentally, we're almost at a hundred online views – Oh it just hit a hundred! – that's the highest number I've ever had of people watching live during the interviews. Congratulations.

SALVADORE POE : You're kidding! Wow. I'm shocked.

RICK ARCHER : Folks who are watching, feel free to send in questions if you have any, there's a form at the bottom of the upcoming interview stage.

Okay... let me see, I got some other questions here.

SALVADORE POE : These questions are great, Rick, I'm really happy to speak to you about these questions. Some of them are nice and challenging too, because I don't claim to know everything, I just don't, and so I'm happy that you bring up challenging questions as well. Let's find out what's true, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Well, I kind of work that way. I also don't claim to know everything and I'm not afraid to appear ignorant and to sort of butt my ignorance up against somebody else's knowledge if that's what it is in order to help to clarify it. I'd rather err on the side of feeling that I know less than I do rather than more than I actually may, you know what I mean?

SALVADORE POE : That's very genuine, I think, and I feel the same way because when I was a seeker boy I was knowing everything, you know. *(Both laugh)*

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : I was never so arrogant as when I was a humble seeker I tell you that.

RICK ARCHER : *(Laughs)* You're more humble than everybody, right?

SALVADORE POE : *(Laughs)* Yeah, I was.

RICK ARCHER : Here's a point that I think you touched on earlier, but it wouldn't hurt to dwell on it again. You said liberating this mind does take time because it is a habit, a whole lifetime of habit so it's not even natural for it to end immediately. Let's dwell on that a little bit more because some people might feel frustrated that they kind of understand what you're saying here but they just feel this nagging sense that they don't totally get it.

SALVADORE POE : Okay, and we did speak about it before. So, many people have had so-called awakening experiences, maybe even recognize their essential nature, but had gone right back into the ignorance or whatever or believing in self again... believing in self even with the work that I do. So I'm able to – when I'm working with someone, specially one on one – help them to have a recognition here and now that they're free essentially, that they're... and it really works and they all said – not all of them, but most of them say they really can recognize this and I can see that it's true. Then, I give them the audio and they go listen and they call me a week later and say: Oh, I got lost in the week, all these doubts came up and I forgot who I am and it's not working. Because, again, the momentum of self-doubt and ideas and spiritual concepts – it's like their locomotive, basically, it's just endless propulsion that needs to be seen through many times I feel and in my experience before the knowing of my freedom is more convincing and doubtless than the power of the momentum of the doubts that can come in.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. So if the Super Bowl gave you the half-time show instead of Coldplay and Beyonce and you got up there and told half a billion people that they're already free and so on, we wouldn't necessarily have half a billion enlightened people out there all of a sudden.

SALVADORE POE : No, no.

RICK ARCHER : So, aside from that initial glimpse or recognition or understanding that you're already free, what would you prescribe as a means of rooting out those doubts and stabilizing that certainty or that clarity?

SALVADORE POE : First of all I suggest that people dig one hole and if they feel that they've seen, recognize something true from what I share then stick with this one hole, because what we do as seekers is we dig a little hole five inches and get a little water, and then we don't feel the gush of the big... you know the big fountain of water, so we start digging a bunch of other holes and we never get to the well, put it that way. So I say if I'm working with someone and I say if you recognize this is true and I can see many of them do, I say then don't read other things, and don't look at all these Youtube videos and don't meditate. Just do this! That's the first thing I'd suggest, and I never tell anyone, I just suggest. And then I say keep coming meeting me and have some more sessions and – 'cause I go through eight or ten full inquiry sessions with people. It's not just a one-time thing – it was until the book came out anyway – eight or ten sessions. But then after that I also have groups that meet, a bunch of people who have finished the inquiries can just get together, be together, be on a holiday together, ask questions to more and more clarify doubts and make it more and more doubtless. And so I don't want anyone hanging around long, I want them to be finished with me, also I don't want any followers or anything, I really want people to be finished, but I also want to be realistic and helpful so I try to help them until they don't need any help any more.

RICK ARCHER : And you do those groups as online webinars or something?

SALVADORE POE : Yes, I do, on Skype and unfortunately in India my internet's not so great, so sometimes there's some Skype troubles, but yes we usually have around eight people on those meetings. Eight or ten. I may end up adding more meetings if it's still working with more people, I don't know yet.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Regarding that metaphor of digging one deep hole – of course that's a popular metaphor, but I've also heard, and some people have said that for them it seems to work till maybe – you know, not dig ten holes but use ten tools to dig one deep hole, maybe a trowel, a shovel and a spade, a backhoe, you know just try different tools.

SALVADORE POE : If it works, it works.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, whatever works

SALVADORE POE : Whatever works I'm all for that, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Another thing you said in your book is... because again this is a famous saying: If we want freedom as much as a drowning man wants air, here it is, always here.

SALVADORE POE : Already here. It's already here. If that's your intention then you can't fail. It's not possible, because you will recognize that it's here, that's what you want, that's where you'll stay.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, so

SALVADORE POE : It's not a doer-ship, by the way. It's not something you can choose to do that. It's just that it's the overriding intention like any other overriding intention, if that's the strongest intention then that's what will prevail.

RICK ARCHER : Now I think some people might wonder, well okay but how do you strengthen the intention? I want it but I'm kind of wishy-washy, I want a lot of other things, I'm not like the drowning man who wants air, I feel that my intentions are kind of dissipated or dispersed.

SALVADORE POE : There's no doer. I'm kind of stubborn about that. I don't think there's a way you can strengthen it. I think frustration and being fed-up with suffering and confusion and coming to the point where you just want to know what's true because you are finished for whatever reason it is, or if something happens – an illness or something – that just spontaneously happens to you, I'm very serious in my view that there is no doer that can do something like strengthen their intention.

RICK ARCHER : Mm, yeah, I mean it's a funny thing, there's no doer who could go out and buy a book.

SALVADORE POE : That's right.

RICK ARCHER : But one might somehow find oneself on Amazon on just (*unclear*)

SALVADORE POE : Yes, exactly! Listen, and I go through this enquiry with people and I say that you choose to be a spiritual seeker and I say let's go find out. What's the very first thing – something happened at some point of your life that made you become a spiritual seeker – what's the first thing? Someone said: Well, I had something shifted in my consciousness. And I said: Did you make that happen? No, I didn't, it just happened right? Or someone says: Someone handed me a book on Zen and something about that book attracted me. And I say: Did you choose to be attracted or did it just attract you? And they say: Well, it just attracted me. And so you see one thing leads to another and there is no point where you choose to do anything, and even people

who see me they're flipping around YouTube and some people look at my video and for some reason – maybe because they're crazy, I don't know – for some reason they like what I say and it rings a bell, they don't create that and so then the next outcome of that is the action to write me a letter or something.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Would you agree with the following statement : that although in reality you don't have free will or choice, if you perceive yourself as having it, exercise it to the best of your ability.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, that sounds great. That sounds good, but I say let's go further and see that there's no self here that can possibly have free will. If you still believe in self, then I say of course, absolutely, try to behave and that's why there's religion with moralities and right behavior and right all of this stuff.

RICK ARCHER : Because people have actually distorted that notion that there is no self to excuse their inexcusable behavior. They use it as a license to do bad things.

SALVADORE POE : Then I say they really haven't recognized it because if you recognize this then you lack nothing, then why would those bad things appear for you.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. You know they're all saying: The Devil made me do it.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, quite an excuse. I've used it a few times myself.

RICK ARCHER : Just looking at my notes here, and again feel free to bring up anything that comes to mind.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, I forget what we were talking about...

RICK ARCHER : Oh we were talking about free will and having choice and stuff like that. And wanting freedom as much as a drowning man wants air.

SALVADORE POE : This thing about self – maybe let's talk about this thing about self for a minute, because I think there's a bunch of misunderstandings about this. And maybe it's obvious to you, I don't know, and maybe obvious to some of your listeners. I'll say it anyway because I know it's not obvious to some people. The idea that we have, we have to transcend the self, or kill the self or kill the ego or something. There is a basic presumption there that there is a self that has to be killed. I say there's no such thing as transcending something that isn't. When you come to recognize your essential nature is free and also come to know in a real way that there's only now. When I say there's only now, it's not a platitude. There's only now. And if there's only now then there can't be any self because self is based on time – my past history, my future – so when we know there's only now then we see that there is actually no self. We can see clearly for ourselves

there is no self story, this is only a myth, so self is a myth. Just like Santa Claus is a myth. So I say the idea that you need to transcend or kill self is like me saying to you: Rick, go kill Santa Claus.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, so maybe killing the self what that really means is kind of like breaking through the delusion that there is one...

SALVADORE POE : Yes, it's know what's true. Know what's true and it will set you free.

RICK ARCHER : I heard a story about a little girl who drew a picture of a monster, right, and she put it up on her bedroom wall. And then her father, somebody, heard her crying when she was supposed to be sleeping and he came in and he said: What's the problem? And she said: I'm afraid of the monster. (*laughs*) So the father said: Let's take it down.

SALVADORE POE : It's a great metaphor. I use a symbol (*unclear*). It's absolutely true, you turn on the light and you see it's just a guy with a sheet, it's no ghost. Turn on the light and you see there is no self to speak scary demonize the monster that we have to kill – it doesn't exist because there's only now, and where is it? I say let's get real, let's be serious and be mature and jump off all of those beliefs. But it needs to be... I'm just speaking to you because I know you get this, but it needs to be seen clearly through enquiries actually. I can't just say it to someone. It has to be seen clearly through enquiries.

RICK ARCHER : Right, and actually there is another good metaphor we could throw in here. It's: How do you get rid of the darkness in a room? Do you analyze it, do you try to push it out the door or something like that, or you just turn on the light and boof, it's gone.

SALVADORE POE : Exactly. That's exactly how it is. You didn't get rid of darkness, you just turned on light.

RICK ARCHER : Add a second element, so to speak.

SALVADORE POE : But see, I see that goes back to the pure...

RICK ARCHER : Purification thing?

SALVADORE POE : Yeah. If I'm... I get a little extreme maybe sometimes, but at the end of the day that's the truth of purifying yourself as well. At the end of the day. Maybe you're right all those years there's some purification process, but at the end of the day when it's time to jump you will see that you, essentially, here or now are already pure. There's no smudge or stain on you, actually.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. I think it's one of those paradoxical things you know. Ramana was fond of saying – and he didn't coin the term – that it takes a thorn to remove a thorn. And there's an old Zen saying which I've often quoted. Someone said: Enlightenment may be an accident but

spiritual practice makes you accident prone. *(Both laugh)* It's like one of those things which ultimately may be meaningless or absurd or unnecessary, but it serves as a sort of transitional function for a great many people. For instance, in your book there you say: It takes a great maturity to recognize, but a far greater maturity to be finished. So how does one actually become more mature?

SALVADORE POE : You don't. There's no doer. It just happens when you're frustrated. See, I say the maturity I'm speaking about is not like the normal maturity we're speaking of. The maturity I'm speaking about is you try to learn whatever it is, however much it is that you had to try and do. For some people it's forty years of meditating, for some people, one of my... person I worked with, only read one book – The Power of Now – and was seeking in science and he was just ready, that's all he needed. He was ready to be finished. So I just say – and he was just mature, someone who meditated forty years – so it has nothing to do with age or anything like that, it's just when one is ready to be finished, they're ready. You get what you get when you get it. I have a friend online who says that and it's a beautiful thing. There's no doer here.

RICK ARCHER : Ya, I'm going to say something now that you're not going to like...

SALVADORE POE : I don't like it. *(laughs)*

RICK ARCHER : ... which is that, to my way of seeing there is such a thing as... I know you're, and I'm not advocating comparison here, but there is such a thing as levels of spiritual development or levels of maturity and we actually all come into this life at different levels and pick up where we left off, so to speak, and Gita talks about that. And so the guy who's meditated forty years might not be as mature – in terms of the kind of the way we're using the term – as that guy who just picked up the book for the first time. He actually might be a much more advanced soul. So now you can try to pick that apart because I know you don't like what I'm speaking

SALVADORE POE : No, I won't pick it apart because Ramana says the same thing and I'll just say I have no idea.

RICK ARCHER : Right.

SALVADORE POE : I only know this now. I don't know anything about past lives or karma from past lives and everything. So I'm not going to deny it. If Ramana said that, you know so... I don't take everything Rama says for granted, but he's certainly very respected and I also respect him.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, and he may have been speaking from his own actual cognition or he may actually have been speaking on the shoulders of his tradition, who knows?

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, exactly, I would never deny someone else's experience. If that's their experience, that's their experience and if that's their knowing, that's their knowing. So, as I say I can only speak for myself and I have no knowing of that kind of thing.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : And my feeling is that... I really just don't know why some people are ready or not and I think it's an easy... it's an easy concept because our minds want something to understand, a philosophy to grasp onto which says: Well, because he was meditating in his former life that's why he was ready. We want some explanation to know, we want to know, but I say how about not knowing anything. How about just being in the unknown and you just don't know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : And that's the... we talked about skepticism before, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. As I said earlier, hold it lightly. If it's an interesting theory it kind of explains a lot of things, but do we really know?

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, exactly. So if we're honest... I say to you even, I say to myself if I'm honest I really don't know if that's true or not. I've read it but what does that mean to me? So I always say to people I work with: What do you know for yourself? It doesn't matter what I know, or Ramana, or anyone else. What do you know? And then be finished with me, you see.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : That's the way I see things.

RICK ARCHER : Well then again, I don't know that there are black holes, you know. I've never experienced one and I don't have the scientific knowledge to have proven it in any way but I kind of trust the guys who, so many of them have said: Ya, there are; we know about them and here is why and so on. So, there were whole TV shows where little kids remember in remarkable detail the details of their previous life and they take the kid to that location and he names all kinds of things, you know, so there is a fair amount of evidence.

SALVADORE POE : Yes, but there could be all kinds of explanations, the simplest explanation is reincarnation. Maybe, and I'm not saying this is true, but maybe that person has very psychic abilities and just got images of some things now, not in the past life, and recognizes them. I'm not saying that's true either. I'm saying what about that? Maybe that's another possibility. The simplest one we know of is reincarnation, so our minds go immediately to that as if we know something, but we don't know if that's true actually either.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : It seems like it would be. It think it's cool if it is.

RICK ARCHER : I think it's a good attitude. Let's see... a couple of questions came in here. One second... here's one from a guy named John in Texas. He said: Is it possible that the search is not really over but that he found a comfort zone and just stopped looking? That's an interesting question.

SALVADORE POE : Is there a difference?

RICK ARCHER : I don't know. *(Salvadore laughing)* Let's see... I would say if you're asking me that question that... for me, I have in my own experience just found it convenient to distinguish between the word... between seeking and kind of like exploration.

SALVADORE POE : Oh yeah.

RICK ARCHER : It's like during the seeking phase there's always this desperate, unfulfilled, got-to-get-it, you know...

SALVADORE POE : Sure.

RICK ARCHER : ... oh you just die for now, and then that somehow dissolved and dissipated and disappeared, and now it's more like: Wow, what an adventure! You know, like this is such a joy to just continue to...

SALVADORE POE : Absolutely!

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : Yes. And if that's what's someone's interest is, then that's great. Mine is maybe for music or something, I explore music, and you maybe explore other aspects and other people explore another aspect. So that's certainly true what you're saying, but as far as is there an end of seeking, I have to say there is you know, and I think that people close to me that know me, first of all they know that I'm human, I'm not perfect, but I am not seeking.

RICK ARCHER : Right.

SALVADORE POE : I am not trying to transcend this basic humanity. I don't think there's anything transcendent than this right here. This is it, I'm home in my own knowing, in my own being and I don't think I'm lacking anything, I don't think I'm incomplete or un-whole and I don't think anyone else is superior or inferior to me, either. I just am at ease with who I am and so I say there is no need for seeking any longer, you see, in that way.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Well, let me play with that. You are superior to me as a guitar player.

SALVADORE POE : Yes!

RICK ARCHER : I once learned how to play “Gloria” – those three chords – remember that song? But that’s about.../

SALVADORE POE : I don’t know those three chords.

RICK ARCHER : But I’m probably superior to you as a drummer. I used to be a drummer in a rock band. *(Both laugh)* So, in a relative world there are hierarchies, there are...

SALVADORE POE : Of course.

RICK ARCHER : ... there are strengths and weaknesses...

SALVADORE POE : Absolutely.

RICK ARCHER : ... all the rest.

SALVADORE POE : Absolutely. But I can look at a guitar player like Tommy Emmanuel who, I’m not even convinced that guy’s a human being, he’s so amazingly good, and in the past I would be envious but I just revel in the beauty of this expression of incredible-ness, you know, but that doesn’t mean I believe I’m below him as a human being.

RICK ARCHER : Not as a human being, but maybe as a guitar player.

SALVADORE POE : Of course! As a guitar player, he’s a far better guitar player than I am.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : But it doesn’t make me feel inferior at all.

RICK ARCHER : No. And I don’t think we should feel inferior to Ramana Maharshi or the Buddha or... inferiority is not useful, but that is not to say that they have not ascended to a more mature level of spiritual development than we have, and I’m speaking for myself I don’t know about you. *(while he is speaking, Salvadore is also interjecting with some comments, but they are unclear)*

SALVADORE POE : Oh I don’t compare myself in that way. I just know that I know my essential nature is free and I think Ramana’s essential nature is free and he is one of the great spiritual sages of all times, and I’m not and that’s fine with me. *(Both laugh)*

RICK ARCHER : So that bags the question: Can you be more free? I mean with the degrees of freedom.

SALVADORE POE : Well, I think it's pretty free to admit that and be completely at ease, that's fine. This is the way I... I'm me. I'm Sal, Sal is never going to be Ramana Maharshi, he doesn't care to be Ramana Maharshi, he's just happy to be himself.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. What you said a minute ago... there is no transcendent reality, this is it. Is that the way you put it? Here it is from your book, you said: We read or heard that there is some transcendent phase like heaven, or some transcendent consciousness, we've read these things, but in truth what we know is this – form, with its ordinary consciousness.

SALVADORE POE : Mmhm. That's right. I always go back to the thing – I only know what I actually know here and now. The only thing I know is here and now. Here and now what I know is this – aware consciousness with form, all in the same time. That's all I actually know. If there is some transcendence, it must be a thought in my mind that it's going to happen some time in the future or some place else, but it has to be a fantasy because here and now are what I know is this.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Well, what I'd say is that is look at what physics tells us. They tell us that there's stuff which appears physical is actually ninety-nine point nine nine nine nine percent.../

SALVADORE POE : Space.

RICK ARCHER : .../ empty space. So it's not what it appears to be.

SALVADORE POE : Right.

RICK ARCHER : And there's some physicist who say well, ultimately, if you get right down to the bedrock or the real nitty-gritty, ultimate reality, it's actually consciousness. They try to equate consciousness with the unified field and so on, and so it's not exactly true to say that what we know is this form with its ordinary... that this is what is real because we're actually only perceiving it through a lens, darkly, as the Bible says. We're not really sort of necessarily apprehending the true nature of what we're experiencing.

SALVADORE POE : Yes, but we come to know something and you're right, I use the example myself. If my eyeballs were electronic microscopes what would I see? It's nothing but space, I wouldn't see an arm.

RICK ARCHER : Right.

SALVADORE POE : It's just space. But the eyeballs themselves are not electronic microscopes. For whatever reason, I don't know why, they perceive at a particular gross level,

RICK ARCHER : Yes.

SALVADORE POE : and because they perceive at a particular gross level the brain puts together this space into apparent form which I know it's not solid and I know it's mostly space but I exist and I live in this play of, in this Maya, the play of Lila, whether it's solid or not which I know it's not this is my experience, here and now. And the saying absolute and form, that's why I say the absolute and form are not separate. This form – an electron microscope – and the scientist tells us that it's actually consciousness as a space, I agree. This form is actually space in a consciousness itself, appearing as form because of the gross level of my human perceptions.

RICK ARCHER : Right. But is your experience limited to your human perceptions?

SALVADORE POE : Yes, I would say my experience is limited to my human perceptions, although I've had experiences that appear to be transcendent, but those experiences have come and gone and as special as they've seemed during the time that they've come and gone, they can't be that special because they happened to me and to others and so I don't place as much value on anything that comes and goes anymore as a place in this moment right now, you know.

RICK ARCHER : But if you say you know your true nature, you're not knowing it through your eyeballs, you're not knowing it through any of your senses, you're not even knowing it through your intellect, it's knowing itself in a way, right?

SALVADORE POE : Yes, the knowing itself is the essential. The knowing itself.

RICK ARCHER : Right.

SALVADORE POE : See, it's very, very possible and obvious to come to this realization that I know and knowing that it's here and now is self-evident. Knowing itself is knowing and that this knowing is essentially my essential being. This knowing. Of course that's not using the senses as using the knowing which the senses appear in.

RICK ARCHER : Yes.

SALVADORE POE : Does that make sense?

RICK ARCHER : No, it does, and in language you have to be careful when you start talking about this stuff, because it's easy to start saying: Well, you're experienced and so on and we're not talking about – and that implies sensory engagement – and we're not talking about that. But there is another... if you can pardon my use of the word, there is another dimension to your experience other than what your senses can provide and it's sort of... I don't know if we want to use the word "transcendental" or... there is some faculty of knowing – maybe not even faculty – the self knows itself by itself and somehow the instrumentality of you, of Salvadore Poe, has become capable of allowing that knowing to take place. *(Throughout Rick's speech, Salvadore agrees by saying "Yeah")*

SALVADORE POE : I don't think Salvadore Poe...

RICK ARCHER : I knew I was getting trouble there. *(Both laugh)* No, I'm not saying he does, I'm saying the instrument...

SALVADORE POE : To this question I have to look into it myself.

RICK ARCHER : Okay. Yeah, because Salvadore Poe knowing it wouldn't make it an object.

SALVADORE POE : But Poe is only an appearance. The play of Lila, the Maya, the self that is actually not actual but that I fully embrace as the play as if I was Romeo on stage, you see?

RICK ARCHER : Mmhm.

SALVADORE POE : I fully embrace this play called Salvadore, this story called Salvadore, I fully embrace it knowing fully that it's a myth, that it's a play. So that possibly can't know anything. The knowing itself knows that.

RICK ARCHER : Yes. Which is what all the scriptures say, you know, the Gita...

SALVADORE POE : I guess.

RICK ARCHER : The self knows itself by itself. It's not.... Because for Salvadore to know it, it would have to be a thing that's separate from Salvadore.

SALVADORE POE : For Salvadore to know it other than in the play and there's no real Romeo either other than there's an actor playing Romeo. I'm the actor playing Salvadore, knowing the acting of Salvadore, whatever, but not denying it either, I'm just aware this is something silly like this, you know. Not denying it either because it's apparent. I'm not saying it's solid and real and empirically true, but it's apparently true isn't it and so why deny it, why deny the experience that's right here and now.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. The thing you said about the eyeballs a little while ago, a few minutes ago, just being so designed as to register gross impressions, the gross creation and so on, I would like to suggest to you – not as anything we can resolve right now but as a possible direction for future growth – that many spiritual explorers have said that that limitation eventually begins to get refined and the senses begin to experience not just the gross but more refined and refined and refined levels of creation, and eventually that one as if experiences...

SALVADORE POE : Oh, okay.

RICK ARCHER : ... experiences the finest relative, a celestial realm and then even experiences the absolute nature of things. We were just talking about how this arm is not really an arm, it's

actually space, that somehow the senses arrive at a level where everything is experienced in terms of the self, in terms of its absolute nature. So, that might possibly be a direction that one might grow after initially knowing oneself.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, could be, absolutely. I don't particularly have an interest to do that and I think it's a very worthy thing. Sounds kind of yogic to me, a meditational thing, and I've had experiences where I really just perceive myself as this... I don't know, it's very subtle, very subtle particular, I don't know how to put words to it, like not solid. I've had experiences like that, but it's not to me a practical way to live, so I don't aspire towards that or something like that.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, I wouldn't say one needs to aspire but some of my best friends are yogic. *(laughs)* What I mean to say is... I mean I have a friend, for instance, who basically realized herself fifty years ago and has found that in his *(sic)* experience over the decades there's been this continuing refinement along the lines of what I was just describing and much more. The reason I find that interesting is I think it's good to paint a picture of possibilities for the full range of human development and never limit it to just this or just this. There's.../

SALVADORE POE : I like that, that's great Rick, that's good, that sounds great to me. I fully concur, yup. I really have no idea what will happen in my experience in the coming years...

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, you never know.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, no, I don't close the possibility. I just say that I'm not seeking anything other than what is, and whatever may change in my experience I think anything like that is very possible.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : Who knows.

RICK ARCHER : And obviously you've made a pact with the Devil because at 58 you look like you're 30, so you've got plenty of time to explore all this. *(Both laugh)*

SALVADORE POE : Well, thank you.

RICK ARCHER : A question came in. This is from Geoberto in Sao Paolo, Brazil. Getting a lot of questions from Brazil today - If the enlightenment does not change anything in you, if you are still the same person, did not become an even more relaxed person physically and mentally – which he feels, this person, through simple practice of Zazen – then what is the meaning of writing books and telling the world about it if you continue to be the same? In other words I guess he's saying if it doesn't make it better in some way, then what's the value of it?

SALVADORE POE : I never said it doesn't make it better, it makes it a lot better, a lot better, a lot more relaxed, a lot more at ease, and as I said before when I first recognized the relief that poured off my body was untold relief. And so my experience of living is much better than it was before, much more at ease. Of course, there are moments of whatever can appear, but overall much more at ease. You see it's more than just my experience, my sort of sensorial experience like that. It's what am I... before we wake up, you know, there's a lot of pathology in our minds and there's a lot of malignancy – look at the shape of the world – but a person who comes to know their essential nature is free and is lacking nothing, is completely whole, is for the most part – and I never make absolutes – for the most part much more benign, as a person. A much more benign expression in this world. So even to say that “enlightenment”, so-called because I don't use the word, so use it anyway, or “awakening” – whatever you want to say – to me, it's given me a lot of relaxation and much happier overall; no more seeking, much more at ease, but more than that it's taken a lot of malignancy out of the world, so really it's better for sure for others, not least myself, you know.

RICK ARCHER : I think that's a great point, because you hear a lot of people saying: Well, if you're an asshole, you're going to be an enlightened asshole.

SALVADORE POE : I don't think ... (*inaudible*)

RICK ARCHER : Right, I really think it does have an impact on your personality and your behavior.

SALVADORE POE : It does. It absolutely does, but that doesn't mean I'm perfect, you know.

RICK ARCHER : No.

SALVADORE POE : I can sometimes say something stupid you know.... but for the most part I always say I'm much more benign than I used to be, much less malignant presentation to this world than I used to be and I think it's true for everyone who wakes up, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Well that concurred with what Jesus said you know: Forgive them Father, they know not what they do. They knew not what they were doing because they knew not what they were, you know, but then if you come to know what you are you're probably not going to get a job putting nails on people and stuff.

SALVADORE POE : That's it, exactly. (*Both laugh*) Exactly, and that's what he says: They know not what they do, they don't know their essential nature is free and they don't need to do this kind of thing, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. And what you said just now actually has exciting implications for the world, I know you don't like to speculate too much but.../

SALVADORE POE : No, that's true.../ (*unclear*)

RICK ARCHER : .../ we live in a world, a lot of violence, a lot of problems and so on and I kind of feel like a spiritual renaissance will really be able to be the antidote to all this stuff.

SALVADORE POE : Well, I don't know what will happen or what will ever happen but if everyone right now is finished seeking and knew they lack nothing there would be no Dick Cheneys in this world, would there be? Yeah, I always like to point him out. (*laughs*) He's done a lot of bad things, not his fault either, there's no doer, but it would be... if everyone knew they lacked nothing and they're complete and whole, there would be so much... or maybe no greed and thirst for power and abuses in this world, would there be? But I don't speculate that that's going to happen, I have no idea you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, it's hard to say.../

SALVADORE POE : They can only... we can only see for ourselves, we can only awaken for ourselves – not that there's a doer, but it only happens to an individual. I can't predict what's going to happen to anyone else, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Well, you know a forest can only be green if each individual tree is green. You can't have a green forest if all the trees are withered.

SALVADORE POE : Absolutely.

RICK ARCHER : And it does seem to be a proliferation of awakening and interest in awakening and so on among more and more individuals, so one can only hope for the society.

SALVADORE POE : I think you're right, it does seem to be and the internet's been an amazing thing for that because even when I started seeking and I didn't really know much about the internet and there wasn't much on. I had to go to foreign countries to meet teachers, which I did because I was very dedicated. And these days it's all over the internet, so that's very good I'd say.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah.

SALVADORE POE : That's very good. And even though there's probably a lot of not such great stuff, I think there's also a lot of good stuff out there as well, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Well, there's a lot of funny cat videos and then there's Buddha at the Gas Pump. (*Both laugh*)

SALVADORE POE : Those funny cat videos they're very positive, you know. Make people feel good and that's nice.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. There's a great one of a cat riding around on a room boat wearing a shark suit. Got millions of those. *(Both laugh)*

SALVADORE POE : That's great.

RICK ARCHER : Alrightey, so we've covered quite a bit, I'm sure we can cover more. In your book... a lot of it is transcripts of sessions you've had with people where you put them through these little exercises and you have them do what you call "holidays" which is like just taking a break from the usual engagement in our activity and our perception and looking within or just checking in to see if this or that.../

SALVADORE POE : No, I wouldn't say it like that, but yes having it, yes, okay.

RICK ARCHER : .../ Yeah. So if obviously people decide to call you up and do Skype sessions, you'll do some of that kind of thing with them? *(Salvadore nods)* Or is there anything you could do with the general audience that you would like to do here in the interview?

SALVADORE POE : I could lead through a very basic holiday, people can maybe have a basic recognition of something that's here and now.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, why don't you do that, keeping in mind that you're speaking to ultimately thousands of people who're going to be watching this.

SALVADORE POE : Okay, fine. I'll try it.

So I would say then just be relaxed, there's no meditation and stiffness, keep your eyes open and just relax away. Just for a moment only, a few seconds, just relax the focus of attention so that attention is not focused on anything in particular and that aware that this attention is just freely open and we'll just do that for a moment. A few seconds.

What we see very quickly is maybe a thought comes in and then attention goes to that thought and then the attention in that moment becomes exclusive to that thought. No problem, that's a perfectly natural function of this form. We're not demonizing it or trying to change it, we're going to see something, maybe notice something a little different. So once we've noticed that we're attending to thoughts, soon as we notice once again just relax the focus of attention and allow aware to be open here.

Then I would say, let's start noticing a few simple things. We don't have a lot of time but we'll notice a few little things here. What we notice firstly, is what is aware. Aware, can't deny it right? Simple, ordinary everyday aware. Notice that.

Again, thoughts come in and we'll attend to thoughts, no problem. When we notice it, we're on holiday. Aware.

So then let's notice a few more things here. When we're not exclusively focused on one thing in particular, like thoughts, when we relax the focus of attention, we see everything is included here, isn't it? Everything. All the objects in the room, my voice, the body, your body, your thoughts – they're all included. Nothing is excluded. I think that's probably pretty clear.

See, we're coming to know some things so where I work is I start very simple like this. We come to know very simple things. Step by step we come to know more things about our essential being, you see. So for now we notice a couple of things, that when I relax the focus of attention, attention is not... aware is not exclusive. It includes everything here.

Let's notice some more. This which is aware here is not a thing, is it? That's why I don't call it "awareness". Because it's not an object, it's simply aware. And as simply aware is not an object, aware is not bound to anything, is it? So then we could see that aware is free, we can use that word, right? Freely aware. What's more, we see that aware is here and now only. It's not a time and it's not a place, but here and now we can say aware is.

This which is aware which includes everything which is here and now always is the same now as it was five minutes ago if you had looked, isn't it? That it's not changed and it's the same as it will be in five minutes if you look again. Aware here, free, all inclusive, now. And all of the objects here are changing, they're all changing. But this aware is not changing, is it?

Let's look into self for a moment. Because I say self, this ego self thing is a story, it has to do with time. It has to do with time, right? The story of Salvadore, where he came from, all his past experiences, the poor-me stories, the great-me stories, all of the things that happened in Salvadore's past, so-called past, and Salvadore's future aspirations and goals and future enlightenments and all these things. The story of self, the self is a self, isn't it? So, have a holiday now, look here and now there's only now, right? Look now. Where is the self? Must get real, where is it? It isn't. It's a myth. Otherwise you have to show me where the past is and I don't see any past, I don't see any future, I see now. That story of Sal, the whole past me story and future me story is just a fantasy for adults. We play that story. Let's just say for a moment here and now, just for a moment, not forever, just to see something that's a little more essential and a little more actual here and now – there is no self story, is there?

I'm not sure how much further to go, Rick.

RICK ARCHER : That's good, that's good, gives people a taste. I just wondered.../

SALVADORE POE : This is the beginning and this really leads to more clear recognition of what this is, you know.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah, usually when you're doing that with people it's a little bit more interactive and they're kind of responding to your questions and stuff, but I just want to let you run through some of that just to give people a taste.

SALVADORE POE : Okay, thanks, I think that was a good idea.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Okay, well this has been a great conversation, I really enjoyed it.

SALVADORE POE : Me too, Rick, thank you so much, I'm really grateful that you invited me, thank you.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. To make a few wrap-up points. I've been speaking with Salvadore Poe and I will be creating a page on batgap.com for this interview which will have some of his biographical information linked to his book, linked to his website... websites isn't it? Don't you have a couple of them?

SALVADORE POE : Well, I have a music website and then the liberationis enquiry website.

RICK ARCHER : And so that's: liberationis.com is it?

SALVADORE POE : Yeah.

RICK ARCHER : Okay. I'll be linking to that but in case of viewers listening, it's: liberationis.com, which is also the name of his book.

SALVADORE POE : You got a salvadore-poe.com then you'll see the link to it. Both sites.

RICK ARCHER : Nicely-designed book, by the way. My wife does book cover design and has in the past and when she saw this one she thought: Wow, good book cover! For a change.

SALVADORE POE : My girlfriend came up with the egg concept when she did it.

RICK ARCHER : It's good.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah.

RICK ARCHER : Cosmic egg.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah.

RICK ARCHER : Because for some reason a lot of times spiritual people design really lousy book covers, but this is.../ *(laughs)*

SALVADORE POE : I did, I did.

RICK ARCHER : .../ this is a nice one. It's like trying to discourage people from picking up the book. So anyway, as I mentioned in the beginning this is an ongoing series which most of you listening or watching this know there are hundreds of them now, so if you go to batgap.com you'll see them all archived under the Past Interviews menu. Then also there is an audio podcast of this, and just about as many people listen to the audio as watch the video, so feel free to subscribe to that, there's a link on the side. If you just watch this on YouTube... some people don't even bother to come to batgap.com, they just subscribe on YouTube to the channel and they get notified by YouTube every time there is a new interview, so you can do that too. But we'd like you to come to batgap because there's a lot of interesting stuff. There's even like a ringtone for your phone and a screen saver and things like that. And there's also the Donate button which, as I mentioned in the beginning, is kind of essential for us to support this whole enterprise, made totally available to everyone for free but it relies upon voluntary donations for its continuance. So again, thanks for listening or watching and thanks to you, Sal, and I'm really glad that your internet connection worked out and we had a great conversation.

SALVADORE POE : Yeah, we got lucky. It's been a rough week with this internet, I tell you I was concerned for a while.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Well, your internet is better than Andrew Harvey's was and he's over in Chicago and yours is like twice as clear and ten times as clear

SALVADORE POE : *(unclear)*

RICK ARCHER : Or this other guy that I interviewed in North Carolina last week – Norio, he was having internet problems, but I'm encouraged about the pod... for years I've been saying I don't want to interview people in India because they won't have a good internet connection, but you've inspired me to check it out.

SALVADORE POE : Good, good. Good, I'm sure there're lots of great people to speak to here.

RICK ARCHER : Yeah. Alright, well, thank you Sal and thanks to those who've been listening and watching and we'll see you next time. (1.58.06)